

Joe Bustillos

November 29, 1990

Column: Why Add Windows 3 to an IBM-clone When the Original Runs on an Apple Macintosh?

The computer literati appear to be in complete agreement: Microsoft's Windows 3.0 is not only pleasing to the eye but also fun to use. Pretty pictures, but if all one wants is pretty pictures, why not just use an Apple Macintosh computer, where the Windows-like interface originated?

For those who have not opened a computer magazine in the last seven months, Windows 3.0 is a multitasking graphical user interface (GUI) for IBM and IBM-clone computers. What is a GUI (pronounced "gooey")?

In the days before Steve Jobs and Apple Computer made a PC for "the rest of us," the primitive computer user (circa 1981) would often be greeted by a screen that was mostly blank except for a little "C:" prompt (called the system prompt) and a blinking cursor. To use his programs the user would spell out the name of his program, such as "WS" for Wordstar, hit the "Enter" key and away he would go. Most of the commands within the program were issued using either a special "control" key or an "alternate" key in combination with an alphanumeric key, all of which had to be memorized by the user. This type of interface was called a Command-Line-Interface (CLI). It was a hold-over from the old teletype/mainframe computer days.

On the other hand, with a GUI the user is greeted by a screen filled with little pictures or icons that represent programs available to the user. To run his <sup>her</sup> programs, the user must move the cursor to the icon with either keyboard keys or a small pointing device called a mouse and press the "Enter" key or a button on the mouse. Within the program, the user is often greeted by a menu of commands across the top of the screen. This form of interacting with computers was popularized by Apple with its introduction of the Macintosh computer in 1984. Windows 3.0 follows the Macintosh GUI philosophy so closely that some might ask why add Windows to an IBM-clone when the original interface runs native in the Macintosh?

One reason for adding Windows to an IBM-clone is that there are so many IBM-clones in use. That is, there's no point in buying a Macintosh and abandoning a perfectly good clone when the GUI environment can be had on the clone. With the continuing advancements in hardware technology driving the prices down, it may be simpler and less expensive to upgrade the memory and processor in ones IBM-clone and add Windows than to make the initial investment in the current crop of Macintosh computers.

Whenever large computer companies such as Apple or IBM or Microsoft announce large <sup>scale</sup> "improvements" in their hardware or software, the microcomputer community tends to let out a collective groan. The short history of microcomputers is littered with frustrated <sup>and</sup> furious computer users who have bought into hardware and software systems only to find the market move away

and eventually abandon them. Veterans of the computer revolution might remember and say a prayer for those who spent their last dime on a Texas Instrument-99/4, or the Coleco Adam or the Kaypro and Osborne luggables. Individual users and companies fear that the thousands of dollars they have invested in software and hardware will suddenly become obsolete. The beauty of Windows 3.0 is that a user, contrary to what some advertisements would lead you to believe, can continue to use his favorite IBM programs within the Windows environment. I use such standards as Word Perfect (5.1), PC Tools, Norton Utilities, PC File and other regular DOS programs daily with no incompatibility problems.

Interestingly, the types of shortcomings found in the Windows environment are similar to those found in the original Macintosh: if there is too little system memory (RAM) and a processing unit not powerful enough the screen graphics and disk activity run too sluggishly. It takes real computer muscle to adequately move a GUI.

The original Macintosh had 128 KB (kilo-bytes) of internal memory, a single-disk drive and a Motorola 68000 processor. The Macintosh did not come into its own until the internal memory was boosted up beyond 512 KB, a hard disk added and a more powerful processor used. Windows 3.0 requires at least 1 MB (1 mega-byte or 1,000 kilo-bytes) of internal memory, a hard disk and a Intel 80286 processor. Either way a GUI demands memory, hard disk space and a powerful processor.



Advances in the Macintosh are making it possible to run IBM programs on the Mac. But IBM clones still continue to cost less and outsell the Macintosh. With the introduction of Windows 3.0, the interface the Mac made famous can now be had by the rest of us.

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Joe -  
Reference? This is a very narrow topic for  
a select publication. It needs some anecdotal  
material for a general audience.  
Watch use of punctuation.  
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